

A VIEW OF GOD'S GLORY

NO. 3120

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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*"And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory."
Exodus 33:18*

THAT was a large request for Moses to make. He could not have asked for more, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory." Why, it is the greatest petition that man ever asked of God. It seems to me the greatest stretch of faith that I have either heard or read of. It was great faith which made Abraham go into the plain to offer up intercession for a guilty city like Sodom. It was vast faith which enabled Jacob to grasp the angel, it was mighty faith which made Elijah rend the heavens, and fetch down rain from skies which had been like brass, but it appears to me that this prayer contains a greater amount of faith than all the others put together.

It is the greatest request that man could make to God, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory." Had he requested a fiery chariot to whirl him up to heaven, had he asked to cleave the water floods and drown the chivalry of a nation, had he prayed the Almighty to send fire from heaven to consume whole armies, a parallel to his prayer might possibly have been found, but when he offers this petition, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory," he stands alone, a giant among giants, a colossus even in those days of mighty men.

His request surpasses that of any other man, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory." Amongst the lofty peaks and summits of man's prayers that rise like mountains to the skies, this is the culminating point, this is the highest elevation that faith ever gained, it is the loftiest place to which the great ambition of faith could climb, it is the topmost pillar of all the towering structures that confidence in God ever piled.

I am astonished that Moses himself should have been bold enough to supplicate so wondrous a favor. Surely, after he had uttered the desire, his bones must have trembled, his blood must have curdled in his veins, and his hair must have stood on end. Did he not wonder at himself? Did he not tremble at his own hardihood? We believe that such would have been the case had not the faith which prompted the prayer sustained him in the review of it.

Whence, then, came faith like this? How did Moses obtain so eminent a degree of this virtue? Ah, beloved, it was by communion with God. Had he not been for forty days in the council chamber with his God? Had he not tarried in the secret pavilion of burning fire? Had not JEHOVAH spoken to him as a man speaks with his friend, he would not have had courage enough to ask so large a boon. Yea, more, I doubt whether all this communion would have been sufficient if he had not also received a fresh testimony to the grace of God, in sparing the guilty nation through his intercession.

Moses had argued with God, he had pleaded the covenant, and although God had said, "Let me alone, that I may destroy them," he had still maintained his hold, he had even ventured to say to the Lord, "This people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now if thou wilt forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast written."

He had wrestled hard with God, and had prevailed. The strength gained by this victory, joined with his former communion with the Lord, made him mighty in prayer, but had he not received grace by these means, I think the petition would have been too large even for Moses to venture to carry to the throne.

Would you, my brethren, have like faith? Then walk in the same path. Be much in secret prayer. Hold constant fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, so shall you soar aloft on wings of confidence, so shall you also open your mouth wide and have it filled with divine favors, and if you

do not offer the same request, yet you may have equal faith to that which bade Moses say, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory."

Allow me to refer you to the thirteenth verse of this chapter, where Moses speaks unto his God, "Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now *thy way*." Moses asked a smaller favor before he requested that greater one. He asked to see God's *way* before he prayed to see His *glory*.

Mark you, my friends, this is the true mode of prayer. Rest not content with past answers, but go again and double your request. Look upon your past petitions as the small end of the wedge opening the way for larger ones. The best way to repay God, and the way He loves best, is to take encouragement from past answers to prayer, and ask Him ten times as much each time. Nothing pleases God so much as when a sinner comes again very soon with twice as large a petition, saying, "Lord, Thou didst hear me last time, and now I have come again."

Faith is a mighty grace, and always grows upon that on which it feeds. When God has heard prayer for one thing, faith comes and asks for two things, and when God has given those two things, faith asks for six. Faith can scale the walls of heaven. She is a giant grace. She takes mountains up by their roots, and piles them on other mountains, and so climbs to the throne in confidence with large petitions, knowing that she shall not be refused.

We are most of us too slow to go to God. We are not like the beggars who come to the door twenty times if you do not give them anything. But if we have been heard once, we go away, instead of coming time after time, and each time with a larger prayer. Make your petitions larger and larger. Ask for ten, and if God gives them, then for a thousand, then for ten thousand, and keep going on until at last you will positively get faith enough to ask, if it is right and proper, as great a favor as Moses did, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory."

Now, my friends, that we have spoken a little upon the prayer itself, we shall have to see how it was received at the throne. It was answered, first, by *a gracious manifestation*, secondly, by *a gracious concealment*, and thirdly, by *a gracious shielding*.

I. First of all, this prayer which Moses offered was heard by God, and He gave him A GRACIOUS MANIFESTATION, "And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy."

I think that when Moses put up this prayer to God, he was very much like Peter, when, on the mountaintop, he wist not what he said. I do think that Moses himself hardly understood the petition that he offered to God. With all the clearness of his ideas, however pure his conception of the Divinity might be, I do think that even Moses himself had not adequate views of the Godhead. He did not then know so much of God as he has now learned where he stands before the throne of the Most High.

I believe that Moses knew that "God is a Spirit." I think he must have been sensible that the mind of man can never conceive an adequate idea of the incomprehensible JEHOVAH. He must have learned that the God of mount Sinai, the King whose feet glowed like a furnace and made the mountain smoke, could never be grasped by the sense of a mortal. Yet it is likely, with all this knowledge, that the great lawgiver had a vague and indistinct idea that it might be possible for Divinity to be seen.

My friends, it is hard for creatures encumbered with flesh and blood to gain a just conception of a spirit. We are so linked with the material that the spiritual is above our reach. Surely, then, if a mere spirit is above our comprehension, much more, "the Father of spirits, the Eternal, Immortal, Invisible."

The poet sings most truly—

*"The more of wonderful
Is heard in Him, the more we should assent.
Could we conceive Him, God He could not be:
Or He not God, or we could not be men.
A God alone can comprehend a God."*

These eyes are but organs to convey to me the knowledge of material substances, they cannot discern spirits, it is not their duty, it is beyond their province. Purer than celestial ether of the most refined nature, subtler than the secret power of electricity, infinitely above the most rarefied forms of matter is the existence we call a spirit. As well might we expect to bind the winds with cords, or smite them with a sword, as to behold spirits with eyes which were only made to see gross solid materialism.

We find that Moses "saw no similitude," no visible form passed before him. He had an audience, he had a vision, but it was an audience from behind a covering, and a vision, not of a person, but of an attribute.

Behold then the scene. There stands Moses, about to be honored with visions of God. The Lord is about to answer thee, Moses. God is come, do you not tremble, do not your knees knock together, are not your bones loosened, are not your sinews broken? Can you bear the thought of God coming to you? Oh, I can picture Moses, as he stood in that cleft of the rock, with the hand of God before his eyes, and I can see him look as man never looked before, confident in faith, yet more than confounded at himself, that he could have asked such a petition.

Now, what attribute is God about to show to Moses? His petition is, "Shew me thy glory." Will He show him His justice? Will He show him His holiness? Will He show him His wrath? Will He show him His power? Will He break yon cedar, and show him that He is almighty? Will He rend yonder mountain, and show him that He can be angry? Will He bring his sins to remembrance, and show that He is omniscient? No, hear the still small voice, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee." Ah! *the goodness of God is God's glory*. God's greatest glory is that He is good. The brightest gem in the crown of God is His goodness. "I will make all my goodness pass before thee." There is a panorama such as time would not be long enough for you to see.

Consider the goodness of God in creation. Who could ever tell all God's goodness there? Why, every creek that runs up into the shore is full of it, where the fry dance in the water. Why, every tree in every forest rings with it, where the feathered songsters sit and make their wings quiver with delight and ecstasy. Why, every atom of this air which is dense with animalcule is full of God's goodness.

The cattle on a thousand hills He feeds, the ravens come and peck their food from His liberal hands. The fishes leap out of their element, and He supplies them, every insect is nourished by Him. The lion roars in the forest for his prey, and He sendeth it to him. Ten thousand thousand creatures are all fed by Him. Can you tell, then, what God's goodness is? If you knew all the myriad works of God, would your life be long enough to make all God's creative goodness pass before you?

Then think of His goodness to the children of men. Think how many of our race have come into this world and died. We are of yesterday and we know nothing. Man is as a flower, he lives, he dies, he is the infant of a day, and he is gone tomorrow, but yet the Lord doth not forget him. O my God, if Thou shouldst make all Thy goodness pass before me—all Thy goodness to the children of men, I must sit me down on an adamant rock forever, and look through eternity, I should wear these eyes out, and must have eyes of fire, or else I should never be able to see all Thy goodness towards the sons of men.

But then rise higher still, and think of His sovereign goodness towards His chosen people. O my soul, go you back into eternity, and see your name in God's book of predestinating, unchanging grace! And then come down to the time of redemption, and see there your Savior bleeding and agonizing. O my soul, there were drops of goodness before, but rivers of goodness roll before you now! When you saw the Son of God groaning, agonizing, shrieking, dying, buried in His grave, and then rising again, you saw the goodness of God. "I will make all my goodness pass before thee."

I say again, what a panorama! What a series of dissolving views! What sight upon sight, each one melting into the other! Could I stand here this morning and borrow the eloquence of an angel, could I speak to you as I might wish, but alas! I cannot break these bonds that hold my stammering tongue, could I loose these lips, and speak as angels speak, then could I tell you *something*, *but not much*, of the goodness of God, for it is past our finding out.

Since I cannot utter it myself, I would invoke all creation to be vocal in His praise. Ye hills, lift up your voices, let the shaggy woods upon your summits wave with adoration. Ye valleys, fill the air with the bleating of your sheep and the lowing of your cattle. Ye that have life, if you have voices, tune His praise, and if ye walk in silence, let your joyful motions show the thanks ye cannot speak. O ye trees of the field, clap your hands, ye winds, in solemn harmony chant to His glory. Thou ocean, with thy myriad waves, in all thy solemn pomp, thy motion to and fro, forget not Him who bids a thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain, and write no furrow on thine ever-youthful brow. And you, ye storms, howl out His greatness, let your thunders roll like drums in the march of the God of armies, let your lightnings write His name in fire upon the midnight darkness, let the illimitable void of space become one mouth for song, and let the unnavigated ether, through its shoreless depths, bear through the infinite remote the name of Him who is always good and doeth good.

I can say no more concerning God's goodness. But this is not all that Moses saw. If you look to the words which follow my text, you will see that God said, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee," but there was something more. No one attribute of God sets God out to perfection, there must always be another. He said, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy."

There is another attribute of God, there is His sovereignty. *God's goodness without His sovereignty does not completely set forth His nature.* I think of the man who, when he was dying, sent for me to see him. He said, "I am going to heaven." "Well," I replied, "what makes you think you are going there, for you never thought of it before?" Said he, "God is good." "Yes," I answered, "but God is just." "No," said he, "God is merciful and good."

Now that poor creature was dying, and being lost forever, for he had not a right conception of God. He had only one idea of God, that God is good, but that is not enough. If you only see one attribute, you only see part of God. God is good, but He is a Sovereign and doeth what He pleases, and though He is good to all, in the sense of benevolence, He is not obliged to be good to any. "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy."

Do not be alarmed, my friends, because I am going to preach about divine sovereignty. I know some people, when they hear about sovereignty, say, "Oh, we are going to have some terrible high doctrine!" But as it is in the Bible, that ought to be enough for you. Is not that all you need to know? If God says, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy," it is not for you to say that it is high doctrine.

Who told you it was high doctrine? It is good doctrine. What right have you to call one doctrine high and another low? Would you like me to have a Bible with "H" against high, and "L" against low, so that I should leave the high doctrine out to please you? My Bible has no mark of that kind, it says, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious." There is divine sovereignty.

I believe some are afraid to say anything about this great doctrine lest they should offend some of their people, but my friends, it is true, and you *shall* hear it. God is a Sovereign. He was a Sovereign ere He made this world. He lived alone, and this thought was in His mind, "Shall I make anything, or shall I not? I have a right to make creatures, or not to make any."

He resolved that He would fashion a world. When He made it, He had a right to form the world in what shape and size He pleased, and He had a right, if He chose, to leave the globe untenanted by a single creature. When He had resolved to make man, He had a right to make him whatever kind of creature He liked. If He wished to make him a worm or a serpent, He had a right to do it. When He made him, He had a right to put any command on him that He pleased, and God had a right to say to Adam, "Thou shalt not touch that forbidden tree." And when Adam offended, God had a right to punish him and all the race forever in the bottomless pit.

God is so far sovereign that He has a right, if He likes, to save anyone in this chapel, or to crush all who are here. He has a right to take us all to heaven if He pleases, or to destroy us. He has a right to do just as He pleases with us. We are as much in His hands as prisoners are in the hands of Her Majesty

when they are condemned for a capital offense against the law of the land, yea, as much as clay in the hands of the potter. This is what He asserted when He said, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy." This Doctrine stirs up your carnal pride, does it not? Men want to be somebody. They do not like to lie down before God, and have it preached to them that God can do just as He wills with them.

Ah! you may hate this doctrine, but it is what the Scripture tells us. Surely it is self-evident that God may do as He wills with His own. We all like to do what we will with our own property. God has said that if you go to His throne in prayer, He will hear you, but He has a right not to do so if He likes. He has a right to do just as He pleases.

If He chooses to let you go on in the error of your ways, that is His right, and if He says, as He does, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," it is His right to do so. That is the high and awful doctrine of DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY. [This subject is further discussed in the following sermons by Mr. Spurgeon—#77, Divine Sovereignty, #442, God's Will and Man's Will, and #553, Election No Discouragement to Seeking Souls].

Put the two together, goodness and sovereignty, and you see God's glory. If you take sovereignty alone, you will not understand God. Some people only have an idea of God's sovereignty and not of His goodness, such are usually gloomy, harsh, and ill humored. You must put the two together, that God is good and that God is a Sovereign. You must speak of sovereign grace. God is not gracious alone, He is sovereignly gracious. He is not sovereign alone, but He is graciously sovereign. That is the true idea of God.

When Moses said, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory," God made him see that He was glorious, and that His glory was His sovereign goodness. Surely, beloved, we cannot be wrong in loving the doctrine of free, unmerited, distinguishing grace when we see it thus mentioned as the brightest jewel in the crown of our covenant God.

Do not be afraid of election and sovereignty. The time has come when our ministers must tell us more about them, or if not, our souls will be so lean and starved that we shall mutiny for the bread of life. Oh, may God send us more thorough gospel men who will preach sovereign grace as the glory of the gospel!

II. The second point is, there was A GRACIOUS CONCEALMENT.

Read the next verse. "He said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live." There was a gracious concealment, and there was as much grace in that concealment as there was in the manifestation. Mark you, beloved, when God does not tell us anything, there is as much grace in His withholding it as there is in any of His revelations.

Did you ever hear or read the sentiment that there is as much to be learned from what is not in the Bible as from what there is in the Bible? Some people read the Scriptures and they say, "We wish we knew so-and-so." Now you ought not to wish such a thing, for if it was right for you to know it, it would be there, and there is as much grace in what God has not put in the Bible as in what He has put there. If He had put more in it, it would have been our destruction. There is just enough and no more.

Do you know how Robert of Normandy lost his sight? His brother passed a red-hot copper bowl before his face and burned his eyes out of their sockets, and there are some doctrines that men want to know, which, if they could understand them, would be like passing a red-hot bowl before their eyes. They would scorch their eyes out, and their understandings would be completely crushed.

We have seen this in some ministers, who have studied so much that they have gone out of their minds. They have gone further than they ought to have ventured. There is a point to which we may rightly go, but no further, and happy is the man who goes as near to it as possible without overstepping it. God said to Moses, "Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me, and live." There are two senses in which this is true. No man can see God's face as a sinner, and no man can see God's face even as a saint.

First, *no man can see God's face as a sinner*. There comes a guilty wretch before the throne of God. God has spread open His books, and set His seat of judgment. There comes a man before the throne of God. Look at him! He is wearing a robe of his own righteousness. "Wretch, how camest thou in hither?" And the guilty creature tries to look at God, and cries that he may live. But no, God saith, "*He* cannot see my face, and live."

Thus saith the righteous Judge, "Executioners of my vengeance, come forth!" Angels come with crowns on their brows, they grasp their swords and stand ready. "Bind him hand and foot; and cast him into outer darkness." The wretch is cast away into the fire of hell. He sees written in letters of fire, "No man can see my face, and live." Clothed in his own righteousness, he must perish.

Then, again, it is true that *no man even as a saint, can see God's face and live*, not because of moral disability, but because of physical inability. The body is not strong enough to bear the sight or vision of God. I cannot tell whether even the saints in heaven see God. God dwells among them, but I do not know whether they ever behold Him. That is a speculation. We can leave that till we get there, we will decide it when we get to heaven.

I hardly know whether finite beings, even when glorified, will be capable of seeing God. This much is certain, that no man on earth, however holy, can ever see God's face and yet live. Why, Manoah, even when he saw an angel, thought he should die. He said to his wife, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God." If you and I were to meet an angel, or a troop of angels, as Jacob did at Mahanaim, we should say, "We shall die." The blaze of splendor would overwhelm us, we could not endure it. We "cannot see God and live."

All that we can ever see of God is what He called His "back parts." The words, I think, signify "regal train." You have seen kings with regal trains trailing behind them, and all we can ever see of God is His train that floats behind Him.

You sun that burns in the heavens with all his effulgence, you think he is bright, you look upon him and he dazzles you, but all his splendor is but a single thread in the regal skirts of the robe of deity. You have seen night wrapped in her sable mantle, woven with gems and stars, there they shine as ornaments worked by the needle of God in that brilliant piece of tapestry which is spread over our heads, like a tent for the inhabitants of the earth to dwell in, you have said, "Oh, how majestic! That star, that comet, that silver moon, how splendid!" Yet they are nothing but just a tiny portion of the skirts of God that drag in the dust.

But what are the shoulders, what the girdle of divinity, what the bracelets of Godhead, the crowns that adorn His lofty brow, man cannot conceive, I could imagine that all the planets and constellations of stars might be put together, and threaded into a string, and made into a bracelet for the arm, or a ring for the finger of JEHOVAH, but I cannot conceive what God Himself is.

All I can ever learn, all that the thunder ever spake, all that the boisterous ocean ever could teach me, all that the heaven above, or the earth beneath, can ever open to my mind, is nothing but the "back parts" of God. I can never see Him, nor can fully understand what He is.

III. Now, beloved, we go to the third point and that is THE GRACIOUS SHIELDING.

Moses had to be put into a cleft of a rock before he could see God. There was a rock in the wilderness, Moses smote it, and water gushed out. The apostle tells us "*that* rock was Christ." Very well, Paul, I believe it was, but there is another thing that I believe, I believe that *this* rock was Christ. I know it was not Christ literally. Moses stood in a literal rock, he stood on the top of a high mountain, hidden in a cleft of a real rock.

But O my soul, what is the cleft of the rock where you must stand, if you would ever see God's face, and live? Oh, it is the "Rock of Ages, cleft for me," where I must hide! Oh, what a cleaving that was when Jesus died! O my soul, enter into the hole in Jesus' side. That is the cleft of the rock where you must abide, and see God.

*"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find;*

*The holy, just, and sacred Three
Are terrors to my mind."*

But when I get into the cleft of that rock, O my soul, when I get into that cleft whose massive roof is the well-ordered everlasting covenant, whose solid golden floor is made of the solemn decrees of the predestination of the Most High, and whose sides are called Jachin and Boaz, that is, establishment and strength, I am in a cleft of a rock which is so enduring that time can never dissolve it.

Precious Christ, may I be found in You amidst the concussion of the elements when the world shall melt away, and the heavens shall be dissolved! Oh, may I stand in You, You precious cleft of the Rock, for You are all in all to my soul!

Some of you, I know, are in that cleft of the Rock. But let me ask others, "Where are you?" Let it be a personal question. I have preached a long while about God, I have tried to mount the height of this great argument, and speak of the wondrous things of God. I may have failed, but let me say to each one of you, "Are you in that cleft of the Rock?" Can you sing this verse?

*"Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds, in these array'd,
With joy shall I lift up my head."*

In closing, I want to draw one practical inference, what shall it be? Draw it yourselves. Let it be this—There is an hour coming when we must all, in a certain sense, see God. We must see Him as a Judge. It becomes us, then, to think seriously whether we shall stand in the cleft of the Rock when He comes. There is a passage I would mention before closing, "And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him." There was Death on the pale horse, and the original says, "*hades* followed with him." You know that the word *hades* comprises both heaven and hell, it means the abode or state of departed spirits.

Yes, Death is after me and you. Ah, run! run! run! but run as you will, the rider on the pale horse shall overtake you. If you can escape him for seventy years, he will overtake you at last. Death is riding! Here comes his pale horse, I hear his snortings, I feel his hot breath, he comes! he comes! and you must die!

BUT WICKED MAN, WHAT COMES AFTERWARDS? Will it be heaven or hell? Oh, if it be hell that is after you, where will you be when you are cast away from God? I pray God to deliver you from hell. Hell is coming after you sure enough, and if you have no hiding place, woe be unto you. See you that cleft in the Rock, see you that cross, see that blood? There is security, and only there. Your works are but a useless encumbrance, cast them away, and with all your might flee to the mountain. Cry to Jesus—

*"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling."*

Yea, more than this, you will need divine aid even in coming to Christ, so cry yet again—

*"But oh, for this no strength have I,
My strength is at Thy feet to lie."*

But poor helpless one, if you are but hidden in Christ, you are forever secure. Storms may arise, but you cannot be overwhelmed, old Boreas may blow until his cheeks do burst, but not a breath of wind can injure you, for in the cleft of the Rock you shall be hidden until the vengeance is overpast.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

HEBREWS 11:1-21

This is the *Arc de Triomphe* erected to the memory of the heroes of faith, whose names are here recorded by the apostle's inspired pen, with a brief mention of some of their most memorable actions. If it had not been for their faith, which moved them to accomplish such valiant deeds, we might not have known anything about them.

Verse 1. *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

Though the "things" are only "hoped for" and "not seen" at present, the eye of faith can see them, and the hand of faith can grasp them. Faith is more mighty than any of our senses, or than all our senses combined.

2. *For by it the elders obtained a good report.*

It is noteworthy that they obtained this "good report" by their faith. Doubt gives a man an evil reputation, it is only believers who obtain such a "report" as even the Holy Spirit describes as "good."

3. *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*

It is only by believing the inspired record that we can obtain a true understanding of the wondrous work of creation. Science and reason are of little or no avail here, but the opening words of divine revelation explain the great mystery, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

4. *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaks.*

It was the sacrifice of the believing Abel that was well pleasing in God's sight, and though his brother Cain, out of jealousy and malice, slew him, his good reputation continues even to this day. That is the best way of living which enables a man to go on speaking for God even after he is dead.

5. *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death: and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.*

It was by faith, not by works, that this truly gracious man, "was translated that he should not see death." We never read of any unbeliever, "that he pleased God," but this is the inspired testimony concerning Enoch. [See sermons #1307, Enoch, #107, Faith #2100, Faith Essential to Pleasing God, #2513, How to Please God, and #2740, What is Essential in Coming to God?]

6. *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

No one can come to God if he does not believe that there is a God, and that He justly dispenses rewards and punishments.

7. *By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house [See sermon #2147, Noah's Faith, Fear, Obedience, and Salvation]; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*

There is an unholy fear which is cast out by perfect love, but there is a holy fear, a filial fear, which dwells most happily with faith, so was it with Noah, who, "by faith...moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house."

8. *By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed: and he went out, not knowing whither he went.*

Though Abraham did not know where he was going, God knew, and that was quite sufficient for the patriarch. As a little child is willing to be led by his parent, so Abraham was willing to be led by God, even though that meant leaving his own country and his own people, and going to the distant land which God intended to give him.

9-10. *By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* [See sermon #2292, Abraham, a Pattern to Believers]

He was only a sojourner in the land of promise, he knew that even the promised land was only a tenting-ground for him and his descendants, but he also knew that he was on his way to a divinely planned and divinely built city—not like the temporary cities of earth, which shall all perish and pass away, but a city with everlasting foundations, a city that will last as long as God Himself exists.

11. *Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.*

Sarah's faith was not like Abraham's, yet it was true faith, and therefore her name appears among faith's worthies.

12-13. *Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

Though the promises could only be seen afar off, faith has such long arms that it embraced them, clung to them as loving relatives cling to one another, and would not let them go. So may we see the promises, and be persuaded that they belong to us, and embrace them as we clasp to our bosom those who are nearest and dearest to us!

14-15. *For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.*

True pilgrims never think of going back, they know that whatever difficulties and trials lie ahead of them, there are far greater ones in "that country from whence they came out." Bunyan's Christian was quite resolved not to go back to the City of Destruction whatever perils he might have to face on his way to the Celestial City.

16. *But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.*

Their desire for "a better country" has been implanted within them by God himself, and "He hath prepared for them a city" which will more than satisfy their utmost desires.

17-19. *By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall your seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.*

However puzzled Abraham may have been by the command to offer up the son in whom his seed was to be called, his plain duty was to obey that command, and to leave the Lord to fulfill His own promise in His own way. Perhaps he had also learned, through his mistake concerning Ishmael, that God's way of fulfilling His promise might not be his way, and that God's way was always best.

20. *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.*

He was old and blind, so that he did not know which of his sons came for the first blessing, yet he could see into the future sufficiently to bless both his sons "concerning things to come." What wondrous power there is in faith even when it is exercised by very imperfect individuals!

21. *By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.*

That staff had been Jacob's companion on many memorable occasions, so it was most fitting that he should lean upon it while blessing his grandsons.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.